Memory management Keeping your digital photos out of the virtual shoe box. BY KEVIN SAVETZ

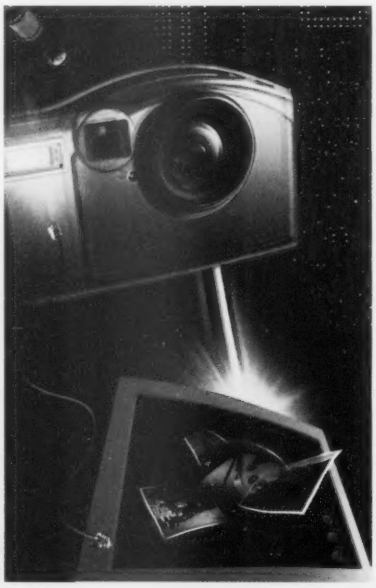
So you bought a digital camera, thinking that somehow it would change the way you take pictures. And it probably did, rather quickly. With a digital camera, photographers feel free to take more shots, knowing that they can delete the poor ones later without wasting film or money.

Then what happens to those pictures? All too often, your great digital images collect on your computer's hard drive, just as inaccessible as a snapshot-filled shoe box gathering dust in the closet. It doesn't have to be that way. Digital photography offers plenty of options for organizing, displaying, and sharing your pictures.

First, you'll need a program to manage the pictures you take. A program like Picasa ($29, available from www.lifescapeinc.com/picasa) or Adobe Photoshop Album 2.0 ($49.99, www.adobe.com) will allow you to sift out the images you don't want, organize the ones that you do, and perform simple changes like cropping and red-eye reduction. For Macintosh users, iPhoto 4, part of the iLife '04 suite ($49, www.apple.com/iphoto), does the job admirably.

Despite the advantages of digital photography, something is missing if you can't hold a stack of pictures in your hand. Fortunately, you have several options for turning digital pictures into prints. Many inexpensive inkjet printers can make high-quality color pictures that look like they came from a photofinisher. But pictures you print at home may not last as long as those from a photo lab. Chances are your local drugstore or photo store can make lab-quality prints from the pictures stored on digital camera media or a CD. If not, a number of Web sites (including Ofoto.com, Snapfish.com, and Photoaccess.com) allow you to upload your pictures. You'll receive your prints in the mail in a few days, for about 30 cents each. You're not limited to standard 4-by-6 glossies, either. You can get your favorite picture as an 8-by-10 or poster-sized print or even get it printed onto a giant canvas, note cards, or a coffee mug.

You can create a digital slide show to share your photos. Ulead DVD PictureShow ($49.95, www.ulead.com) is software that will put your pictures on a DVD complete with music, narration, and captions. You could send a DVD full of pictures to grandma or gather the family to marvel at vacation photos, with no projector or screen to fuss with.



Or you can put your pictures on a simple Web site or weblog for little or no cost, making them available for friends to peruse.

A photo book is a great way to show off your favorite photos in a more tangible medium. SharedInk (www.sharedink.com) and Apple's iPhoto software will both let you order high-quality, hardcover coffee-table books showcasing your pictures. A book of wedding or family photos can make a unique gift.

What if you just want traditional glossy prints? Should you abandon your film camera? Gary Lloyd, a professional photographer and member of the Rotary Club of Gaithersburg, Md., USA, says yes. Lloyd hasn't shot a frame of film in more than two years, and he says that even for people who only take occasional snapshots, digital is the way to go. Without the cost of film and development, "digital is a good way to save a little money," Lloyd says. Plus, with software like Adobe Photoshop Elements ($99, www.adobe.com), you can adjust your photographs until they are perfect.

"There is a tradeoff," he says. "You'll spend more time on the computer. But you'll end up with more images that you will want to retain for the rest of your life."

✦ Kevin Savetz (www.savetz.com), a freelance technology writer, has written for more than 70 publications.